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ABSTRACT

Active participation is the key to a successful Outdoor Biology Instructional Strategies (OBIS) workshop for training OBIS leaders. Most workshops are conducted by volunteer OBIS leaders for school and community youth group leaders who will either work directly with the children or train others, in which case, the emphasis of the workshop should be altered slightly. Ten to twelve participants is the optimal workshop size if only one OBIS-knowledgeable leader is available. It is advisable to have one knowledgeable assistant for every 8 to 15 participants. Any central outdoor site can be used for the workshop. Leaders should obtain permission to use the site and should research restroom facilities in advance. Workshops should vary in length from 1/2 to 2 days, depending on the needs of the participants, and should include samples of all varieties of OBIS activities: crafts, games, simulations, and plant and animal investigations. Workshop leaders should adhere to a schedule, prepare all materials in advance, be relaxed and flexible, and encourage participants to join in every activity. Sample schedules for full and half-day workshops are included. A list is included of national community groups that might be interested in an OBIS workshop. (SB)

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How to lead an OBIS* workshop

Outdoor Biology
Instructional Strategies

RC 011198

primer

How to lead an OBIS workshop

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INTRODUCTION

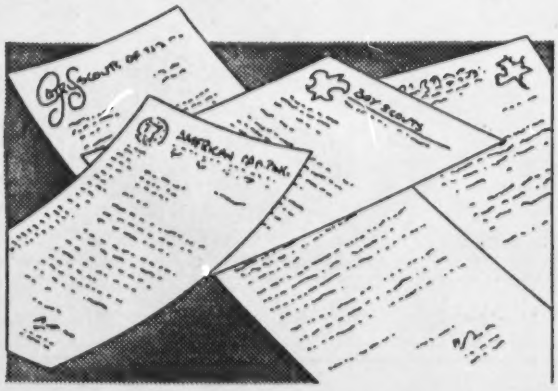
So you want to create an OBIS experience for someone. It's easy! First you should know that we have yet to encounter anyone who isn't pleasantly surprised by OBIS.

Unfortunately, there just aren't enough OBIS staff members to conduct all the workshops requested by various groups. Five authors jetting around the country each year would bring the development of additional strategies to a standstill, so why not share your knowledge of OBIS with those who need it? This will allow OBIS to chain down the authors, keep the presses rolling, and make more activities available to the youngsters.

To experienced trainers and workshop leaders most of our suggestions will not be new. If you have limited experience in training, however, we might be able to allay some of your apprehensions about leading others through a successful OBIS workshop.

WHO'S COMING?

Think carefully about the kind of group that you would like to work with. Scouts, 4-H, Park and Recreation districts, summer camps, and schools with outdoor programs are a few possibilities. YWCA's, scouts, church camps



and other such groups are usually listed in the telephone book if you do not already know of groups you would like to introduce to OBIS. (See the **NATIONAL COMMUNITY GROUPS** section.)

Leaders of these groups may work directly with children or train other leaders. Workshops for these two levels of leaders are similar in content, but should have a slightly different emphasis. When working with trainers, you should weave into your program some of the organizational, behind-the-scenes information you have learned from planning your workshop. Trainers will be doing what you are now doing and need to know why you don't schedule *Habitat Sun Prints* until late morning or afternoon (to improve chances of sunlight), why *Food Chain Game* is best scheduled after lunch (it does not induce sleep), how you got your group together in the first place, what expenses are involved, and how much preparation time was required for your workshop.

HOW MANY?

For every eight to fifteen participants you expect, you should have one person knowledgeable about OBIS to assist you. Interaction drops off if you have much less than eight in a group, and effectiveness drops off with more than fifteen. Therefore, if you are the only person familiar with OBIS, a group of ten to twelve participants is optimal.

If two other leaders are assisting you with the workshop, they probably should serve as individual workshop leaders rather than limit their activities to carrying boxes or helping a few individuals. Divide the entire group into three smaller groups and assign each to one of the three leaders. Each leader can then conduct a different activity at the same time, rotating the groups after a set time period. In this way, the participants see three leaders with their different operating styles. Smaller groups allow for more active participation by the members and reduce the amount of materials you need to provide.

THE SITE

The optimum OBIS site is that spot where salt and fresh waters meet meadows sur-

rounded by hillsides and marshes bounded by forests, deserts, and prairies with an occasional building. Now that you know you can't have it all, be confident you can work in almost any area. You just don't need an Estes Park, Aspen, Poconos, Everglades, or Yellowstone. Instead try a backyard, a local park, vacant lot, hillside with scrub, edge of pond or lake, or a woody area. We have even used hotel entryways and sidewalk strips of grass to bring the activity outdoors. Although a pond makes a great activity site, you don't always need one to do pond activities. Over half the time we dig our own mini-pond or use a child's wading pool.

You may have several site options. If so, try to select one that is central to most of the participants. Travel is expensive, pollutes, and is generally a nuisance, so try to avoid it as much as possible.

For the use of some sites you may need permission from the responsible party. (This way you avoid the embarrassment of having the mounted patrol charge in to investigate your activities.)

It is a good idea when you first check out the site to sketch the directions to the site and its layout. While deciding where you want to conduct the various activities, keep in mind that the closer the different activity areas are to each other, the smoother the shifting is between activities. Remember to determine if restrooms will be available and unlocked.

WHAT DAY?

When you select a date, consider your participants' jobs, available free time, etc. You should check for conflicts with holidays, school calendars, hunting seasons, circus arrivals, or other such competition with volunteers' free time. Hailstones are a hazard so outwit the weather if you can.

HOW LONG A WORKSHOP?

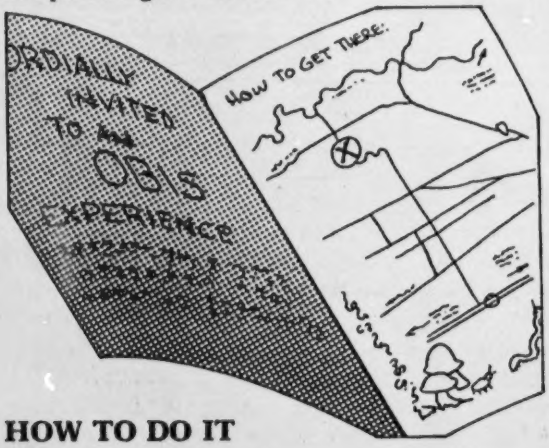
Workshops can run anywhere from half a day to a maximum of two days. One day (six hours) is the most common workshop length, but your own situation should determine the decision. An orientation or awareness workshop may merit only an hour. This type of session would be for a PTA, school board, 4-H Youth Advisors, or troop leaders who are only considering OBIS for future large-scale workshops.

A group of Camp Fire Girl leaders who will be using OBIS with youngsters probably need at least half a day, and one day would be just right.

A group of Girl Scout trainers who will be showing troop leaders how to use OBIS may benefit from an even longer session. For such a group, you might plan a day-and-a-half session. The participants can spend the last half a day practicing on each other and familiarizing themselves with additional activities.

LET 'EM KNOW

Once you have planned the workshop, ask your contact person (the community-group representative you have been dealing with) for a list of people that he or she would like to be invited to the workshop. Your best bet is to send an invitation (with a request for an RSVP) to each of these people. In this way, you will minimize confusion and perhaps find out in advance how many will be attending the workshop. Include the purpose, date, time, place, a direction map, schedule of activities, and likely weather conditions. Emphasize suitable dress for working *outdoors*. Send out the invitations two weeks before the workshop. If it is an all-day affair, remind the participants to bring lunches unless you are planning a barbecue too!



HOW TO DO IT

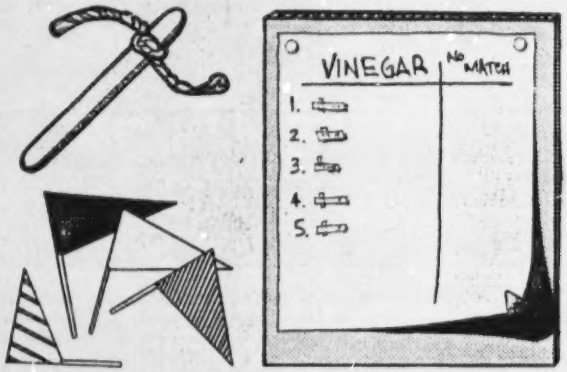
Doing, doing, doing is the motto. The more actual participation the better! *People lead as they have been led!* If your workshop is all talk, that is what you will probably see when you visit your participants at work with their youngsters. Schedule and conduct with the participants a reasonable number of activities that will illustrate the variety of strategies. The most important thing to note here is that you will be leading the participants in activities just as they will be leading their youngsters. The participants actually take part in the activity.

Your participants will tend to use only those activities they see or do, so familiarize them with as many as possible. We frequently conduct three or four activities in their entirety in the morning, then survey six to eight activities in the afternoon. The morning thoroughness is important for the participants' understanding of the timing, flexibility, questioning, open-endedness, and format of OBIS activities. Once the participants are familiar with the style of a few activities conducted as they would be with youngsters, they usually want to see other activities and the associated equipment without spending forty to sixty minutes on each one. This does not mean we think you should talk them through the afternoon session. Instead the participants can tackle the most interesting or challenging aspects of several different activities: searching for sticklers, taking their resting pulse (*Cardiac Hill*), assembling sample equipment, or other such parts of activities not yet done by the group. These fifteen- to thirty-minute experiences with many activities not only create an awareness of what is available, but also build a leader's confidence that he or she can easily lead youngsters and transmit the approach to other leaders.

PREPARATION

Don't go empty handed! You will need to prepare all the materials listed in each of the folios you plan to use. Potatoes for *Invent an Animal* (Set I) will have to be purchased and

painted about twenty-four hours in advance if they are to be dry when you arrive. Food coloring must be diluted for *Water Breathers* (Set II), popcorn popped for *Food Chain Game* (Set II), and macaroni cooked and colored for *Jay Play* (Set III). If you have been conducting OBIS activities already you probably have most of your preparation done and can



quickly organize what you need. Be prepared to deal with problems such as a summer storm or twice as many participants as expected. Take along one or two back-up activities for such emergencies.

ON COMPULSIONS AND ATTITUDES

Although everyone is attending either to learn a new skill, see a new set of materials, or both, there is still a time for fun. OBIS activities are not like old-fashioned school "lessons"; they are fun! There are no grades, the environment is stimulating, and neither the leaders nor the youngsters are required to be there.

OBIS avoids inflexibility which fails to consider the participants' desires and tends to inhibit spontaneous reactions to new discoveries. A relaxed workshop provides the opportunity for laughing or joking about your activities or the brilliant predator device your friend built, which doesn't work. This flexibility opens opportunities to share with others improved ways of working with children and adults in the outdoors.

SAMPLE WORKSHOP SCHEDULES

The time allotments are approximations. Be flexible!

For a full-day session with leaders:

8:30	Set out activities and prepare coffee. Test coffee (leader[s] only).	
8:50	Participants arrive, sign up for Newsletter, and receive name tags (if you use them).	
9:00	General Information (Keep it brief.) Purpose of Workshop (if not previously made clear) Distribute schedule or outline day's activity. Point out restrooms and dangers (snakes, poison ivy, oak or sumac) in an area. Stress learning about OBIS by doing activities.	
9:10	*Invent an Animal*	Set I
9:50	*Silent Stalking*	Set III
10:30	Break	
10:45	Introduction to OBIS (See *What is OBIS?* folio.) Who is OBIS designed for? Where can OBIS be used? What is the goal of OBIS?	
10:55	*Shake It!*	Set III
11:30	*Plant Patterns*	Set II
12:15	Invent a Sandwich (Lunch)	
1:00	*Water Breathers*	Set II
	or *Junk-in-the Box*	Set III
1:30	*Food Chain Game*	Set II
2:00	Survey of activities The OBIS Trail Module	
	Sticklers	Set I
	Habitat Sun Prints	Set I
	Jay Play	Set III
	Web Weavers	Set III
3:00	Wrap Up Questions. Distribute newsletters. Stress trial-version nature of activities and the need for feedback from users.	

For a half-day session with users:

8:30	Set up activities.	
8:50	Participants arrive.	
9:00	Introduction to OBIS (as in previous schedule)	
9:15	*Invent an Animal*	Set I
10:00	*Water Breathers*	Set II
	or Shake It!	Set III
10:30	*Silent Stalking*	Set III
11:15	Survey	
	The OBIS Trail Module	
	Habitat Sun Prints	Set I
	Plant Patterns	Set II
	Sticklers	Set I
	Web Weavers	Set III
12:00	Wrap Up	

Many of the activities shown in the schedules have been quite successful as an introductory assortment. Simulations, plant and animal investigations, gaming strategies, and craft activities are included in this selection. However, don't feel obliged to use only these activities; many other combinations are possible.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

This is a partial list of national community groups that serve children in camps or other outdoor sites. The telephone book and the Chamber of Commerce in your area are probably the two best sources for locating a group to attend an OBIS Workshop.

Community Group Sources

Try the phone book under:

1. Funding Organizations (United Appeal, etc.)
2. Playgrounds and Parks
3. Recreation Centers
4. Religious Organizations
5. Social Service and Welfare Organizations
6. Youth Organizations and Centers
7. Environmental, Conservation, and Ecological Organizations (Ecology Centers, Environmental Centers, Nature Centers)
8. Museums (Junior Museums)

You'll find:

American Camping Association
Big Brother Clubs
Big Sister Clubs
Boy Scouts of America
Boys Clubs of America
Camp Fire Girls
4-H
Future Farmers of America
Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
Girls Clubs
Grange
Junior Leagues
National Park Service
Parent Clubs (Schools)
Parent Teachers Association (Schools)
Park and Recreation Districts
Public Schools
Religious Organizations
Salvation Army
Science Museums
United Fund — Community Chest, etc.
YMCA
YWCA
Youth Centers

ASSISTANCE WITH YOUR WORKSHOP

A network of people knowledgeable about OBIS has been established throughout the United States. These people receive no funds from OBIS, but are willing to assist others who wish to learn about OBIS.

The form of assistance each person can offer varies from conducting full-scale workshops to providing verbal information only. Some may assume the financial responsibility for conducting workshops whereas others will have to recover costs and fees.

You can receive an updated list of these

active resource people by writing to:

OBIS
Lawrence Hall of Science
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Also, you may obtain copies of the latest OBIS Newsletter, this *Primer*, *The OBIS Story*, and other informational literature that becomes available. These materials are free of charge but cannot be air mailed unless you wish to pay the difference in postage. Otherwise allow two to three weeks for delivery.

The Discovery Corner at the Lawrence Hall of Science maintains a stock of supplies and equipment as a convenience to OBIS users. Only those items that are difficult to obtain are available. The Discovery Corner will provide a price list and order form on request.

Good luck to you! Keep your sense of humor throughout and let us hear about your OBIS workshop experiences.

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OBIS ABSTRACT

What Is OBIS?

Start with a group of young people in the out-of-doors and a biological concept or process as the basic ingredients. Add a large measure of fun; stir in the discovery approach; and season with a simulation, a game, a craft, or an interesting investigation. Mix thoroughly and you have one of the 100 activities that have been developed by the Outdoor Biology Instructional Strategies (OBIS) Project.

OBIS provides community-sponsored youth organizations and schools with learning activities for use at common outdoor sites such as lawns, local parks, city lots, neighborhood streams and ponds, and the seashore. Although the activities are intended primarily for ten- to fifteen-year-old youngsters, both younger and older people (including family groups) have enjoyed OBIS activites. Their easy-to-follow format, simple preparation and equipment, and short duration (usually one hour) make OBIS activities suitable for both the experienced outdoor-education leader and the first timer with no previous experience in biology. The activities may be used independently or sequenced to create a program to suit your needs. Scouts, Park and Recreation districts, religious groups, service groups, nature centers, summer camps, and schools are a few of the groups that have used OBIS activites in their outdoor-education programs. OBIS activities help youngsters and adults to better understand and appreciate the ecological relationships in their local environment.

How Were OBIS Activities Developed and Trial Tested?

The OBIS materials were developed at the Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley, and supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation. The materials were developed over a six-year period ending in 1978. Unlike many development projects, OBIS considered the testing of activities with youngsters to be an integral part of the development process. The OBIS activity development procedure is one of devising a strategy, trying it out numerous times with youngsters, making modifications and then retrying the revised activity. This testing,

revision, and retesting process was repeated on a local level and, in many cases, on a national level for each OBIS activity. To help gather national feedback on the trial edition activities, OBIS established a network of OBIS Resource Centers across the country. Over the past five years, OBIS has received thousands of feedback comments from OBIS users throughout the United States. This feedback is being used to revise the existing OBIS trial editions.

The OBIS Trial Editions are available through the Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720.